CLAIMS

1. A shopping assistance service method, comprising the steps of:

(a)   capturing information about an item of interest at a business premises where the item

5   is being offered, and sending that information to a service system;

(b)   receiving the information at the service system, determining a location associated with the information, and processing the information to identify at least the type of item of interest;

(c)   carrying out a specific task relating to the identified item and delivering an output,

10   said location being used to organise and/or select what is in said output.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said location is that of the business premises where the item is being offered.

15   3. A method according to claim 2, wherein said location is determined in one of the following ways:

-   by extraction from said information as specific data included by the sender;

-   by request to a location server of a mobile radio infrastructure through which said information has been sent to the service system from a mobile entity;

20 -   by reference to a database relating business identity to location, said information including the identity of the business where the item is on offer;

-   by processing of image data included in said information.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein said location is a predetermined location

25 specified by the party responsible for sending the information to the service system either in a user profile held by the service system or in said information.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein step (b) involves determining multiple locations associated with said information, one said location being that of the business

30 premises where the item is being offered and another said location being a predetermined location specified by the party responsible for sending the information to the service

system either in a user profile held by the service system or in said information; said locations all being used to organise and/or select what is in said output.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein for the or each location determined in step (b), step (c) involves organising said output according to zones of different accessibility from said location.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein said zones comprise at least two from the following:
- a convenient walking zone around said location;
- a convenient driving zone around said location;
- an internet-accessible zone with delivery to said location.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein said information is sent to the service system over a mobile radio structure at the time of capture.

9. A method according to claim 1, wherein the captured information is stored and then subsequently sent to the service system.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein said data includes said location, this being the location of the business premises.

11. A method according to claim 1, wherein the processing of said information in step (b) involves one or more of the following operations:
- extracting data from specific data fields;
- analysing image data included in said information using OCR techniques;
- matching image data included in said information against stored image data;
- interpreting bar code image data included in said information;
- applying speech recognition to recorded audio data included in said information.

12. A method according to claim 1, wherein said specific task is selected by the party

responsible for sending the information in step (a), the selected task being explicitly specified in said information sent to the service system.

13. A method according to claim 1, wherein said specific task comprises one or more of the following:

- obtaining comparative pricing data for said item from other business outlets for the item and/or obtaining item-availability data concerning those business outlets;

- obtaining further information about the item from a website associated with a business offering the item;

- obtaining further information about the item from internet sources;

- ordering further information about the item for sending to the party responsible for step (a).

14. A method according to claim 1, wherein said output is made available to the party responsible for step (a) in one or more of the following ways:

- by return over a data channel used to the send the information to the service system in step (a);

- by electronic mail to a electronic mail address specified in said information or in a user profile held by the service system in respect of said party;

- by print out and mailing of the print out to a physical mail address specified in said information or in a user profile held by the service system in respect of said party;

- by making said output available at a web site accessible by said party.

15. A method according to claim 1, wherein said item of interest is a product on offer for sale or hire.

16. A method according to claim 1, wherein said item of interest is a service.

17. A shopping-assistance service system, comprising:

- receiving means for receiving at the service system information about an item of interest on offer at a business premises, said information including an indication of the location of said premises;

- processing means for processing the information to identify at least the type of said item of interest and the location of said premises;

- task means for carrying out a specific task relating to the identified item and delivering an output, said location being used to organise and/or select what is in said output.

18. A system according to claim 17, wherein said task means is operative to organize said output according to zones of different accessibility from said location.

19. A system according to claim 18, wherein said zones comprise at least two from the following:

- a convenient walking zone around said location;

- a convenient driving zone around said location;

- an internet-accessible zone with delivery to said location.

20. A system according to claim 17, wherein said task means comprises one or more of the following:

- means for obtaining comparative pricing data for said item from other business outlets for the item and/or obtaining item-availability data concerning those business outlets;

- means for obtaining further information about the item from a website associated with a business offering the item;

- means for obtaining further information about the item from internet sources;

- means for ordering further information about the item for provision to the party who sent the information received by said receiving means.

21. A shopping-assistance service system, comprising:

- receiving means for receiving at the service system information about an item of interest on offer at a business premises;

- processing means for processing the information to identify at least the type of said item of interest;

5 - location-determining means for determining a location associated with the received information; and

- task means for carrying out a specific task relating to the identified item and delivering an output, said location being used to organise said output according to zones of different accessibility from said location.

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22. A system according to claim 21, wherein said zones comprise at least two from the following:

- a convenient walking zone around said location;

- a convenient driving zone around said location;

15 - an internet-accessible zone with delivery to said location.

23. A system according to claim 21, wherein said task means comprises one or more of the following:

- means for obtaining comparative pricing data for said item from other business
20 outlets for the item and/or obtaining item-availability data concerning those business outlets;

- means for obtaining further information about the item from a website associated with a business offering the item;

- means for obtaining further information about the item from internet sources;

25 - means for ordering further information about the item for provision to the party who sent the information received by said receiving means.